

June 2014

Dear Laura

Firstly thank you to you and your team for a successful year for Norwich City Council. The delivery of the corporate plan objectives while at the same time managing to make considerable savings forced on us by cuts in central government funding is impressive. That we received a number of awards recognising this work was, of course, good news, but more importantly that these awards reflected improved services for the people of Norwich is even better news. I am proud of what we achieved over the past eight years and want us to build on our record by continuing to create real changes, which will make our city a better place to live in for all the people of Norwich.

My aspirations for the coming year are as ever based upon the administrations values of fairness, justice, belief in our communities and good quality public service.

We are an ambitious authority and, as such, I want us to deliver more homes, new jobs, regenerate our communities and make the city a fairer place to live during these tough times. As we have found over the past few years we achieve more when we collaborate with others and this is a feature of our work I would want to continue. However, despite support from our partners and increased efficiency within the organisation I believe the year ahead will have its challenges and so I would like us to focus our energies on ensuring we continue to raise the quality of our services still putting the residents of Norwich at the heart of work which we do and on a discreet number of initiatives.

In terms of **housing** the focus should be on:-

- Continuing to build more council homes.
- Improving and upgrading our existing stock.
- Reducing the number of hazardous, poorly managed and sub-standard privately rented homes through enforcement.
- Continuing to tackle and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Looking to limit the percentage of houses that can be houses of multiple-occupancy.
- Expanding the supply of all types of affordable housing.
- Promoting independent living through the provision of information, disabled facilities grants, discretionary loans and adaptations of council homes.

Looking to **jobs and growth** we should:-

- Build on our successful City Deal and use the resources to accelerate development and skills training opportunities.
- Use our resources to lever new investment into the city prioritising investment in projects with the greatest potential to drive sustainable jobs growth.
- Continue to work with the Business Improvement District to boost retail in the city centre and ensure Norwich remains in the top shopping destinations.
- Develop our current work with the universities, and other partners to promote Norwich as a global centre for research, engineering, sustainable energy, science, digital businesses and art and design.

Being serious about **community safety** has been a cornerstone of the administrations delivery since 2006. To build on this in the coming year we should:

- Continue our effective working relationship with our antisocial behaviour team and the police.
- Implement our 12 point plan to make the night time economy safer for those using it and less anti social for those living in areas near to it.
- Continue to improve the enforcement of littering, dog fouling, fly-tipping and graffiti.
- Adopt firmer policies to control premises selling alcohol and introduce more rigorous inspections for off licences.
- Steward our green spaces, parks and trees responsibly.

Norwich has an impressive record in terms of **recycling** and we need to build upon this and the success of our environmental manager and manager of the year. To this end, we should:

- Continue to reduce the disposal of waste to landfill and increase recycling together with reducing the consumption of paper and fuel in council activities.
- Maintain and develop our switch and save scheme which has helped thousands of Norwich residents address their fuel poverty.
- Work with the county council for a citywide 20mph residential, school area and shopping centre speed limit.
- Ensure increased energy efficiency in council-owned properties and also promote domestic energy efficiency.
- Improve recycling information especially to transient residents, such as students and those living in houses of multiple-occupancy.

The city remains a special place because people have made it a **creative, cultural and active place** in which to live and work. In these constrained times our policies should seek to maintain, protect and enhance this reputation. As such I want us to:

- Continue to provide a range of free events to promote participation and engagement. While many of these will be in the city centre I would like to see some out in our neighbourhood communities.
- Aim to attract at least one major national event to Norwich.
- Celebrate the work of volunteers, sports clubs and community coaches.
- Increase the availability of tourist information through the development of our website and linking this with Visit Norwich, The Forum and Discover Norwich websites.
- Work to improve customer satisfaction levels for St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls, the Riverside sports complex and the Norman Centre.

Our work for **a fairer more just city** has grown over the past years in response to changes welfare reforms and other national policies which have put significant pressure on large sectors of our communities. In the year ahead we must continue to develop our work to reach out to all those who need help. So we must:

- Provide more training for officers and councillors advising on welfare changes
- Ensure that the council's money advice team continues to provide high quality debt and money advice to council tenants and that our pre tenancy courses focus on financial capability.
- Continue to work with the voluntary sector so that residents of all ages can access free independent advice.
- Work with the private housing sector to enable owners to access home improvement loans.
- Work alongside credit unions and highlight the dangers of using unlicensed loan providers, loan sharks or high charging companies.
- Meet the requirements of being a Living Wage council by working with our contractors and promote the Living Wage campaign across the city.
- Support existing residents' and communities groups and encourage the creation of new groups where needed.

As central government money is increasingly channelled through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and as our central grants are reduced we clearly have to generate more income if we are to continue to deliver the services we believe the people of Norwich deserve. To this end I want us to:

- Continue to use our assets to our best advantage.
- Look for investment opportunities especially ones which are linked to providing more job opportunities in Norwich.
- Investigate sharing services with other authorities
- Look at what services we provide which might be sold to others perhaps through initiative, such as Coastshare.

- Continue to develop our joint ventures including NP Law, Norwich NPS, CNC.
- Work with LGSS to ensure we maximise the benefit we have from that relationship.

In addition, as we continue to deliver our transformation programme, it is imperative that our residents and customers are able to access information about our services and how they can influence our work.

Finally, as we look to the year ahead we will be shaping the Corporate Plan for the five years from 2015 and we have discussed ways in which we can involve all councillors as well as partners and our residents in shaping this. I look forward to this exciting piece of work which must reflect our belief in the value of local government and its ability to use its local knowledge to deliver good quality services. We have demonstrated very powerfully how the role of civic leader can galvanise successful initiatives in a city. We must build on this to ensure Norwich is well positioned to face a changing environment.